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IM Global Sold to Tang Media, Launches TV Venture With China's Tencent



COURTESY OF IM GLOBAL

[Donald Tang's Tang Media](#) Partners has acquired majority ownership of [IM Global](#), the international sales and production finance business headed by Stuart Ford.

TMP will also back a move to establish a new television production joint venture with [China's Tencent](#), IM Global and Reliance Entertainment, the India-based media investor that was IM Global's majority owner prior to the Tang acquisition.

Deal terms were not announced, but sources point to the deal valuing IM Global at some \$200 million. Reliance invested in IM Global in 2010 and previously controlled some 70% of the company. Following

the new capital injection, Ford and Reliance are understood to retain significant minority interests of roughly equal size.

In a parallel transaction, IM Global, TMP and Reliance Entertainment have partnered with China's social media giant Tencent in a new television production joint venture which will assume the existing IM Global Television banner. The move is the first step into U.S. television production for Tencent, which in its Chinese operations is a partner of several international media groups including ESPN and National Geographic.

The new TV venture, in which IM Global remains the majority owner, is capitalized at \$100 million. Most of that relates to a new, dedicated production investment fund.

IM Global Television's existing focus on high quality scripted content is likely to be expanded into unscripted shows, both of which will boost the unit's year old TV distribution initiative. Content rights in China will not flow automatically to Tencent, though the powerhouse company is expected to be a privileged partner and may develop and represent shows and formats in the China market.

TMP's founding partner Donald Tang has become executive chairman of the IM Global board. Reliance Entertainment and Ford both maintain seats on the parent company's board and on the IM Global Television board alongside TMP and Tencent.

Ford has signed a new multi-year employment contract and will continue as CEO of IM Global and the new television venture. IM Global Television's president Mark Stern is anticipated to continue in his role.

TMP, based in Los Angeles and Shanghai, is active in the development, financing, production and distribution of entertainment content focused on the intersection between China and Hollywood. It has impressive backers, reported to include Tencent, Huayi Brothers, Sequoia Capital and China Media Capital.

Donald Tang was previously chairman and CEO of Bear Stearns Asia. Following that he was founder of Daley & Tang Partners, a venture formed with former Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley to facilitate cross-border transactions. TMP recently appointed veteran Chinese-American director and producer Janet Yang (executive producer on "The Joy Luck Club," producer of "The People Vs Larry Flynt") to a senior executive role.

The relationship with TMP is expected to provide IM Global the capacity to raise substantial further capital that will lift it beyond the ranks of leading film industry independents and site it among the league of corporate independents that includes Lionsgate, Entertainment One and Studiocanal.

"These are landmark deals for our company. In addition to injecting significant growth capital into our fast-growing film and television operations, this puts us in business with one of the most seasoned and respected entrepreneurs on the Hollywood-China axis in Donald Tang. We couldn't be more excited at the prospect of working in both the U.S. and in China with TMP, Tencent and Reliance," said Ford in a statement. "I'm delighted that (Reliance) has decided to invest further in the growth of IM Global."

“We plan to integrate our operating teams and partners globally to help drive IM Global’s success in film, TV and beyond. I am grateful for the ongoing partnership with Reliance and their support is a valuable additional element for all parties,” said Tang in a prepared statement.

The Anil Ambani-backed Reliance ADA Group, which has interests ranging from telecoms to power generation and defense, has been involved in media and entertainment for over a decade. It was a backer of Steven Spielberg’s DreamWorks buyout in 2008 and at one time was operator of the largest cinema chain in India. Latterly it has scaled back its entertainment holdings, selling off post-production and theaters and shuttering some of its TV joint ventures. However, it recently re-committed to Spielberg with funding for Amblin Partners, and it continues to finance a small number of Indian and Hollywood productions.

Beyond Los Angeles, IM Global has offices in New York, London, Mexico City and Beijing and has been active in the Bollywood, Latino and Chinese film industries. Its Beijing office was established in 2013 and has handled international distribution of Chinese-language titles including “The Mermaid,” “Mojin: The Lost Legend,” “Mr. Six,” and “Breakup Buddies.”